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Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions: Environment and development

Report of the Committee on Environment and Development on its third session

Summary

The Committee on Environment and Development held its third session in Bangkok from 29 to 31 October 2013. The Committee reviewed emerging and persistent issues in the field of environment and development, including the environmental sustainability of economic growth, energy security, water resources management and sustainable urban development. The session began with an overview of the ongoing actions and processes aimed at achieving sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, with a particular focus on regional agenda-setting for sustainable development; and outcomes of key regional dialogues on sustainable development, including the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and the regional implementation meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. In addition, the Committee reviewed the progress made in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, together with preparations for the seventh Ministerial Conference and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, which will be held in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

The Committee made a number of recommendations, including: (a) recognizing that ESCAP is an appropriate platform for facilitating dialogue among member States on regional implementation of the agenda for sustainable development, and linking the regional perspective to the ongoing global processes on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the development agenda beyond 2015; (b) supporting the proposal of the secretariat to convene the first Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2014, in enhanced partnership with civil society organizations; and (c) recommending that the Commission at its seventieth session endorse the outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum.

Furthermore, the Committee underscored the role of ESCAP in regional preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, and welcomed additional steps by the secretariat to facilitate further consultation among member States on the organizational modalities of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific.

The Commission may wish to consider the matters calling for action or brought to its attention that are contained in the present report and provide the secretariat with further guidance.

* E/ESCAP/70/L.1.

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I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the secretariat has taken the lead in promoting regional cooperation for achieving sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific in the areas of environment and development policy, energy security and sustainable use of energy, integrated water resource management and sustainable urban development, and calls for further strengthening of such efforts.

2. The Committee recognizes that ESCAP is an appropriate platform for facilitating dialogue among member States on regional implementation of the agenda on sustainable development, and linking the regional perspective to the ongoing global processes on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the development agenda beyond 2015.

3. The Committee supports the proposal of the secretariat to convene the first regional preparatory meeting for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2014 and recommends that the agenda, format and other modalities of the organization of the regional meeting be aligned with those of the global process.

4. The Committee recommends that the Commission at its seventieth session endorse the outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, namely (a) the Ministerial Declaration on Regional Cooperation for Enhanced Energy Security and the Sustainable Use of Energy in Asia and the Pacific: Shaping the Future of Sustainable Energy in Asia and the Pacific and (b) the Plan of Action on Regional Cooperation for Enhanced Energy Security and the Sustainable Use of Energy in Asia and the Pacific, 2014-2018.[1]

5. The Committee takes the view that the region's sustainable development agenda should appropriately reflect the needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, and the voices of vulnerable groups.

6. In line with the outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, the Committee notes the importance of supporting the programmatic direction of the work of the secretariat in energy, particularly in the following fields: (a) access to energy services; (b) energy efficiency and renewable energy; (c) development of energy infrastructure; and (d) energy trade.

7. The Committee takes note of the Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific region on the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, adopted at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue: From the Millennium Development Goals to the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, held in Bangkok from 26 to 28 August 2013.[2]

8. The Committee recommends that the outcomes of key regional dialogues on sustainable development, such as the regional implementation meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development[3] and the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue: From the Millennium Development Goals to the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, be periodically evaluated to ensure proper implementation and that the outcomes be properly considered while setting the development agenda beyond 2015.

9. In noting the relevance of sustainable urban development for the region, the Committee recognizes the importance of the third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III) and the role of ESCAP in convening regional preparations.

10. The Committee welcomes the proposal of the secretariat to establish a contact group to facilitate further consultation among member States on the timing, venue, substantive focus and other organizational modalities of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, as well as the regional preparatory process for Habitat III, to be held in 2016. The recommendations of such a contact group should be considered by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission.

11. The Committee takes note with appreciation of the invitation extended by the Government of Kazakhstan to ESCAP member States and regional stakeholders to join the Charter of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme, especially Central Asian member States, and the offer of the Government of Kazakhstan to host the Green Bridge Institute. The Committee also takes note of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth and the Green Bridge

[1] See E/ESCAP/APEF/3.

[2] See http://apmd2013.unescap.org/documents/APMD2013_Declaration.pdf.

[3] See E/CN.17/2013/3/Add.1.

Partnership Programme as useful ongoing vehicles for promoting sustainable development in the region.

12. The Committee notes the landmark adoption and opening for signature of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Kumamoto, Japan. The Committee notes with appreciation the offer of the Government of Japan to help developing countries strengthen their capacities in implementing this important convention.

13. The Committee notes the initiative by civil society organizations aimed at establishing an interim mechanism comprising major groups and other stakeholders that would coordinate and facilitate their engagement in future regional consultations.

II. Proceedings

A. Towards achieving sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific: regional agenda-setting for sustainable development, outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and outcomes of key regional dialogues on sustainable development

14. The Committee had before it the documents entitled "Towards achieving sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific: regional agenda-setting for sustainable development" (E/ESCAP/CED(3)/1); "Outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum" (E/ESCAP/CED(3)/2) and "Outcomes of key regional dialogues on sustainable development" (E/ESCAP/CED(3)/3).

15. Statements were made by the representatives of the following countries: Bangladesh; China; Japan; Kazakhstan; Nepal; Republic of Korea; and Russian Federation.

16. The documents under agenda items 4 and 5 were introduced by the Director of the Environment and Development Division of the secretariat before the deliberation of the Committee.

17. The Committee was then briefed by the representative of the Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, on the ongoing global process in relation to the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development,[4] and areas in which regional processes facilitated by the regional commissions could contribute to effective implementation.

18. The representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs noted the importance of regional engagement and perspectives in developing thematic areas for the forthcoming session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The High-level Political Forum would address the question "are we on track for a transformative development agenda beyond 2015?" and, more specifically, would focus on the following: (a) how to make poverty eradication irreversible; (b) how to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in decision-making at all levels; (c) how to define a universal agenda that is applicable to all countries while allowing for differentiation; and (d) the form that global and regional partnerships would take in order to implement the development agenda beyond 2015.

[4] General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

19. The representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs noted the principal ways in which the regional commissions could support and reflect the work of the global process which would allow and encourage regional priorities to shape the global agenda. They included regional inputs to the *Global Sustainable Development Report*, which was one of the flagship reports mandated by the General Assembly, and developing regional capacities to oversee and monitor national sustainable development reviews. He encouraged the Committee to make the regional processes as substantive and productive as possible in supporting the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. With respect to the frequency of regional preparatory meetings, he noted that, while the General Assembly resolution defined the modality and format of the High-level Political Forum and mandated holding annual regional meetings, it did not specify the frequency or timing of such meetings. He suggested that one option in the future might be to adopt a rotational system in which each region could have one major preparatory meeting within each four-year period.

20. The Committee was informed by the delegation of Thailand of the outcomes of the recently concluded Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue: From the Millennium Development Goals to the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, which had been held in Bangkok from 26 to 28 August 2013. Noting that the Dialogue was the first meeting following the release of the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the delegation of Thailand highlighted the key outcomes of the dialogue as articulated in the Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific region on the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015.[2] The delegation of Thailand expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for co-organizing the Ministerial Dialogue.

21. The Committee was informed by representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) of the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific CSO Consultation on a Just and Transformative Post 2015 Development Agenda, held on 23 and 24 August 2013, which had been organized to formulate CSO inputs to the above-mentioned Ministerial Dialogue. The representatives of CSOs expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the Ministerial Dialogue and called for continued efforts by the secretariat to promote further engagement of major groups in the regional discussion on sustainable development and the development agenda beyond 2015.

22. The Committee was informed by the delegation of Kazakhstan of the outcomes of the International Conference on the Green Bridge Partnership Programme, which had been held in Astana on 30 September and 1 October 2013. In expressing its appreciation to ESCAP and to the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) for the support provided towards the preparation and organization of the Conference, the delegation informed the Committee that the Charter of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme had been agreed and signed by representatives of eight countries: Belarus; Georgia; Germany; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Mongolia; Montenegro; and Russian Federation. The Committee was informed that the Charter was open for signature by all interested parties and that ESCAP member States were invited to join the Charter as well as participate in the annual International Green Bridge Conference.

23. The delegation of Kazakhstan informed the Committee that, in its first phase, the Green Bridge Partnership Programme was focusing primarily on the needs of the Central Asian subregion in advancing green growth, and it would later expand to the rest of the Eurasian continent. It was brought to the attention of the Committee that ESCAP, in partnership with the Green

Academy and the Coalition for Green Economy and Development of G-Global, had developed e-learning courses on low-carbon green growth, in both English and Russian, for delivery in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. Master classes and training seminars using these methodologies had been held back-to-back with the Green Bridge Conference.

24. The delegation of Kazakhstan also informed the Committee that EXPO 2017, which was being hosted by the City of Astana, had "Future Energy" as its theme in support of the vision of the President of Kazakhstan to make Astana the capital of green technological innovation and the centre of the third industrial revolution for a green economy.

25. The delegation of China expressed its support for the view that the structure and main theme of the regional preparatory meeting for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development should be aligned with that of the Forum itself. The delegation noted that the agenda, format and other modalities of the organization of regional preparatory meeting should include energy security, renewable energy, sustainable urban development, disaster prevention and reduction, sustainable agriculture and sustainable transport as priority areas for the Asian and Pacific region.

26. The delegation of Bangladesh commended the support furnished by the secretariat to member States in pursuit of appropriate national policy and regulatory frameworks in a manner consistent with national laws pertaining to sustainable development.

27. The delegation of the Republic of Korea recommended that, in extending its support to member States, the secretariat should consider (a) concentrating its resources on the most cost-effective projects that best meet the needs of targeted member States and (b) expanding its activity areas to include pollutants and environmental health.

28. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the Committee of national efforts to ensure environmental sustainability. While generally accepting the concept of green development, it stated that each country had a right to choose a model it considered appropriate for the transition to a green economy in accordance with the principles described in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, "The future we want".[4] The delegation expressed full support for the outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, in accordance with which there was a need to further promote access to energy services, energy efficiency as well as the development of energy infrastructure and energy trade. The delegation also informed the Committee of the efforts made and activities undertaken by the Government to develop energy infrastructure and promote trade in the energy sector, which contributed significantly to ensuring energy security in the region. The delegation further informed the Committee that the Russian Federation, while managing to reduce energy intensity by 4 per cent annually, had recently set a target to reduce energy intensity by 40 per cent by 2020 through improvements in energy efficiency.

29. The delegation of the Republic of Korea emphasized the fact that green growth was not a replacement for sustainable development but, rather, a practical tool for achieving sustainable development. The delegation presented several initiatives and policy tools aimed at realizing low carbon green growth in order to support economic, social and environmental sustainability. In that regard, the delegation expressed an interest in sharing the country's experiences and knowledge, including through its support of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth.

30. The delegation of the Republic of Korea highlighted the importance and potential of biodiversity conservation in supporting sustainable development. It informed the Committee of the outcome of a discussion held on biodiversity for sustainable development during the 8th Policy Consultation Forum of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth, held in collaboration with ESCAP in July 2013. It also informed the Committee of ongoing efforts to develop a biodiversity initiative aimed at assisting the PyeongChang Declaration, which had called for biodiversity issues to be discussed in the context of setting sustainable development goals in time for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity,[5] to be held in 2014.

31. The delegation of Kazakhstan informed the Committee of national efforts to promote environmental protection, green growth and sustainable development, and expressed the country's sincere appreciation to the secretariat for supporting national and regional initiatives in those areas.

32. The Committee highlighted the importance of pursing a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and emphasized that, in order to advance the green economy, high priority needed to be given to enhancing transfers of new environmental technologies buttressed by strong international support mechanisms. The delegation of Nepal emphasized that, in setting the regional agenda for sustainable development, special priority should be given to such areas as energy, water, food security, biodiversity and human and social development, as well as sustainable agriculture, including forestry.

33. The delegation of China noted the positive and important areas of consensus that had emerged from recent regional agenda-setting processes with respect to sustainable development. It emphasized that regional agenda-setting should (a) be based on a balanced promotion of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development with attention to the relationship between environmental protection and economic development, (b) uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and (c) lead to the proposal of practical solutions to sustainable development with emphasis on poverty eradication and improving livelihoods.

34. The delegation of Bangladesh emphasized that the needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and the voices of vulnerable groups of people should be reflected in the development agenda beyond 2015. The delegation also highlighted that the development agenda beyond 2015 must be approached with a sense of shared responsibility by all countries, with accountability clearly defined, and must aim to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development.

35. The delegation of Nepal emphasized the need for a balanced and integrated approach among the three dimensions of sustainable development. It also emphasized that the outcomes of key regional dialogues on sustainable development should be periodically evaluated to ensure proper implementation and that the outcomes should also be properly addressed while setting the development agenda beyond 2015.

36. The delegation of Japan presented its efforts to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy after the disasters of 2011 and noted that a number of good practices had been implemented and the lessons learned had

[5] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.

been shared with various international bodies, such as the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency and the International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation.

37. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the high level of participation at the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum, which had resulted in the adoption of a ministerial declaration and a plan of action. The Committee highlighted the preparatory processes and outcomes as providing an excellent example of regional cooperation to produce tangible results, including a clear set of priorities for the work of the secretariat in the area of energy.

38. Noting that Asia and the Pacific is the region most vulnerable to natural disasters, the delegation of Japan informed the Committee that the country was still recovering from the disasters that had struck in 2011, and that such disasters had had the effect of slowing progress made towards sustainable development. The delegation of Japan also noted that dealing effectively with disaster impacts was a critical need, while emphasizing the role of regional cooperation in dealing with natural disasters.

39. In reflecting its interest and commitment, the delegation of Japan further announced the decision of Japan to host the third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Sendai in March 2015. The Conference would provide an opportunity (a) to strengthen capacities in the region for coping with natural disasters and (b) to mainstream disaster risk reduction in all development plans and policies. It was expected to discuss the successor arrangement for the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,[6] which had been adopted in 2005 as an international guideline.

40. The delegation of the Republic of Korea informed the Committee of the country's special interest in the area of sustainable urban development, which was a focal area of the secretariat, and suggested that the secretariat consider expanding its areas of activity to include pollutants and environmental health issues.

41. The representative of the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia informed the Committee of the Centre's ongoing collaboration in Central Asia. In particular, the representative emphasized the Centre's work with the Global Water Partnership – Central Asia and Caucasus and the Global Green Growth Institute in the Republic of Korea to conduct technical assistance and a preliminary study on green growth for water security in the Aral Sea Basin. The study had identified several priority actions to be implemented in the region at the regional and national levels. The representative expressed the Centre's readiness to strengthen its cooperation with ESCAP in further promoting capacity-building in relevant areas, including through the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth.

42. The representatives of civil society organizations informed the Committee of their initiative towards the establishment of an interim mechanism comprising major groups and other stakeholders that would coordinate and facilitate strengthened engagement among them in regional consultations.

[6] A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

B. Regional preparations for the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific and for the third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III)

1. Overview and preparations for the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

43. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Overview and preparations for the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific" (E/ESCAP/CED(3)/4).

44. The secretariat made a presentation. The advice of member States was sought on the progress that had been achieved in implementing the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2011-2015,[7] and appropriate mechanisms for delivering the final report on the plan, as had been mandated by the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2010,[8] and by the Commission in its resolution 67/3. Advice from member States was also sought on preparations for and the convening of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, including themes, host country nominations and details of the regional preparatory processes.

45. Statements were made by the representatives of the following ESCAP members: Bangladesh; China; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Nepal; Republic of Korea; and Russian Federation. Statements were also made by the representatives of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the World Health Organization, the Centre for Environment and Development, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia, Third World Network and United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific.

46. The Committee noted the secretariat's ongoing efforts to monitor progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific. Member States were further encouraged to provide additional inputs so that the secretariat could adequately fulfil its mandate in that regard. The delegation of the Russian Federation expressed its full commitment to the Regional Implementation Plan that had been adopted at the Sixth Ministerial Conference, which had been held in Astana in 2010.

47. The delegation of the Russian Federation suggested that the preparatory process to define regional priorities for the forthcoming seventh Ministerial Conference should be based on the previous practice of subregional and regional preparatory meetings. The involvement of national experts, to be designated by Governments, in the preparatory process should therefore be facilitated. Interest was expressed in participating in both expert and intergovernmental preparatory forums.

48. The Committee noted that the priorities, substantive focus and timing for the seventh Ministerial Conference should be carefully considered, taking into account the Ministerial Conference's historical function in formulating a regional response to emerging and persistent environmental and developmental challenges together with other factors, in particular its position

[7] E/ESCAP/MCED(6)/12.

[8] E/ESCAP/MCED(6)/11.

in relation to the development agenda beyond 2015 and sustainable development goals. It was noted that discussions during the seventh Ministerial Conference should not prejudge the outcomes of global deliberations that would take place at the end of 2015. It was even suggested that it might be appropriate to consider postponing the seventh Ministerial Conference. The Committee welcomed the secretariat's proposal to set up a contact group to facilitate further consultation among member States on the organizational details of the seventh Ministerial Conference, including its venue.

49. Several delegations expressed their support for the theme of sustainable urbanization as proposed by the delegation of the Republic of Korea, due to its significance and the multidimensional nature of the development challenge it represents. The Committee took note of the secretariat's observations that, if that theme were to be adopted, then linkages with the preparatory process for Habitat III could also be considered.

50. The representative of the World Health Organization highlighted the high-level regional meetings related to health and the environment that had been convened by the organization. The representative underlined that important links could be made, particularly on themes, such as climate change, air pollution, occupational health and urban environmental health, between the seventh Ministerial Conference and a series of ministerial meetings on health and environment that had been convened every three years since 2007. The next meeting covering that theme was scheduled to be held in 2016. The representative indicated that the World Health Organization would therefore be interested in collaborating in the organization of the seventh Ministerial Conference.

51. The representative of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies noted the mandate of the regional commissions to promote the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development that had been highlighted in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.[4] That mandate would require greater coherence among regional organizations and processes, including through the Regional Coordination Mechanism. Attention should therefore be paid to the need to engage ministers outside the environmental sector in the regional processes for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. He suggested that there was potential to align the sessions of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific with the regional processes of the High-level Political Forum by adjusting the frequency and name of the former so as to reflect its mandate on sustainable development. It was suggested that research and civil society organizations could contribute to further research and discussions on a more effective institutional framework for sustainable development at the regional level.

52. The representative of civil society organizations highlighted the increasing engagement of civil society in international and regional forums and processes on sustainable development. The contributions of civil society were emphasized, in particular by bringing legitimacy and wide support for the outcomes of these forums and processes. Civil society organizations were working towards building more effective mechanisms for coordination among themselves so as to be able to engage more effectively in those forums. The representative said that civil society organizations stood ready to contribute to the preparatory process for the seventh Ministerial Conference.

2. Regional preparations for Habitat III

53. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Regional preparations for Habitat III" (E/ESCAP/CED(3)/5).

54. Statements were made by the representatives of the following ESCAP members: China; Japan; Nepal; and Russian Federation. Statements were also made by the representatives of UN-Habitat, United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific and the Thailand Environment Institute Foundation.

55. The Committee noted that rapid urbanization posed major challenges for many countries in the region, including in terms of drinking water, sanitation, energy, transportation, preservation of ecosystems and food security, and the importance of promoting sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific.

56. The Committee recognized the critical importance of Habitat III, which was scheduled to be held in 2016, and the role of ESCAP in convening regional preparations. In that connection, the Committee took note of a recommendation that the Sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, which was scheduled to be held in 2015, be used as a regional preparatory meeting for Habitat III through the introduction of an intergovernmental segment.

57. In regard to the theme of Habitat III, "Sustainable urban development: the future of urbanization", the delegation of China noted that development was a prerequisite for sustainable human settlements, which meant prioritizing economic development and poverty alleviation, including focusing on equity. The development of human settlements should be coordinated with economic growth, environmental protection, productivity enhancement and population growth, with equal attention being paid to rural and urban areas so as to ensure balance.

58. Several delegations emphasized the importance of city-to-city collaboration as an effective means of exchanging good practices and developing the capacities of cities to respond to local sustainable development challenges and the significant role that networks of cities could play.

59. The delegation of Japan informed the Committee of several initiatives to promote city-to-city cooperation that had been developed by its Government, such as the FutureCity Initiative and the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment,[9] as well as by individual cities, such as Kawasaki, Kitakyushu and Yokohama.

60. The delegation of China emphasized the importance of urbanization in improving people's livelihoods and the support of its Government in promoting sustainable cities, while referring to Expo 2010, in Shanghai, China, the theme of which had been "Better City, Better Life", and the proposal to establish a world city day.

61. One delegation requested that the United Nations and its concerned bodies and agencies, including ESCAP, analyse the trends of urbanization and its technical, scientific and social dimensions, as well as strategies at the national, regional and global levels to address challenges.

[9] See E/ESCAP/MCED(00)/1, annex III. See also E/ESCAP/1205.

62. The representative of UN-Habitat expressed appreciation for the long-standing and complementary working relationship the organization had with ESCAP, including during the regional preparations for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of Habitat II. The representative also informed the Committee of recent updates pertaining to global preparations for Habitat III. Requests had been made to member States to establish or re-establish national Habitat committees and UN-Habitat had developed draft guidelines for the preparation of national reports. An inter-agency coordination committee for Habitat III had been established to draw on expertise across the United Nations system and efforts were being made to ensure coherence between the development agenda beyond 2015 and Habitat III.

63. The representative of UN-Habitat also called upon member States to consider making full use of already planned meetings, such as the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development and the seventh World Urban Forum, which would be held in Medellin, Colombia, in April 2014.

64. The representative of United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific informed the Committee that local governments and cities had created a global taskforce, supported by several United Nations agencies, to provide coordinated inputs into the development agenda beyond 2015 and Habitat III, which were in line with the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The representative emphasized the need to include cross-cutting issues in the "new urban agenda", which would be tabled for adoption at Habitat III, such as local democratic governance, inclusive participation and local service provision. In noting the limitations faced by many local governments in terms of resources and capacities, the representative emphasized the need to develop national urban policies and to support local government associations.

65. The representative of the Thailand Environment Institute Foundation, speaking on behalf of civil society organizations, stressed the need for inclusive urbanization, while emphasizing the need to include the informal sector and other vulnerable groups in urban decision-making processes.

C. Consideration of draft resolutions, recommendations and decisions for submission to the Commission at its seventieth session

66. In introducing the agenda item, the Director of the Environment and Development Division provided an overview of the process whereby resolutions were to be adopted by the Commission. The Committee was informed about the new guidelines for draft resolutions, which had been developed by the secretariat in order to strengthen the effectiveness of resolutions adopted by the Commission and pursuant to implementation of resolution 69/1 on a conference structure of the Commission for the inclusive and sustainable development of Asia and the Pacific, in particular paragraph 3(d).

67. The Committee was informed that the guidelines for draft resolutions would be presented at the 351st session of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, which was scheduled to be held on 4 December 2013. Member States were invited to circulate, in advance, proposals and/or texts of draft resolutions for consideration by the

Commission at its seventieth session, but no particular draft resolutions were submitted for discussion by the Committee.

D. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme

68. A representative of the Programme Planning and Partnerships Division of ESCAP presented information on the process for preparing the draft strategic framework 2016-2017, which would be approved by the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. The main features of the strategic framework were presented, including: its foundation on mandates approved by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and ESCAP; incorporation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development[4] and the quadrennial review process; and a focus on the substantive integration of environmental, social and economic issues of concern, while also placing emphasis on gender topics and on countries with special needs. The secretariat also provided information on the upcoming biennium 2016-2017 and the approved programme of work on environment and development for the biennium 2014-2015.[10] Advice from member States was sought regarding the future focus of the subprogramme.

69. Some delegations proposed the following as possible future focus areas for the subprogramme for 2016-2017: biodiversity conservation, particularly taking note of the importance of biodiversity in ensuring resilient social and economic development outcomes; sustainable consumption and production; energy security and renewable energy; sustainable cities; disaster preparedness and risk reduction; sustainable agriculture; and technology. One delegation reminded the Committee that poverty reduction was still the priority issue for the region, and recommended that equal importance should be applied to energy security and renewable energy when considering the future focus of the subprogramme. Additionally, it was recommended that the secretariat should attempt, as far as possible, without pre-empting the outcomes of global processes, to align future programmes of work with the development agenda beyond 2015. The crucial role that technology and technology transfer would have in achieving the desired outcomes as regards environment and development in the region was stressed, and consideration of a more prominent role for technology in the upcoming strategic framework, bearing in mind the possibility of establishing a separate committee or subprogramme on technology in the process of reviewing the conference structure of ESCAP, was recommended.

70. In terms of operationalizing the programme of work, it was recommended that the secretariat should increase its implementation of pilot projects, in addition to ongoing normative and analytical works, in order to develop and test best practices that were relevant to the specific needs of individual countries and the region. The results of the mid-term review[11] of progress on implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific[12] were also referenced, highlighting the positive impact of effectively engaging local communities and civil society organizations in on-the-ground projects. Additionally, one delegation proposed that synergies between the work of the subprogramme and other programme areas of ESCAP be strengthened in the

[10] See Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2014-2015, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/67/6/Rev.1), Programme 16, subprogramme 4.

[11] E/ESCAP/CED(3)/4, sect. IV.

[12] See E/ESCAP/67/8, Chap I.

upcoming strategic framework, for example with the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization.

71. Speaking on behalf of a group of civil society organizations, the representative of Peoples' Sustainability Treaties and the Centre for Environment and Development expressed the Centre's admiration for the model of civil society engagement that had been introduced during the current session of the Committee, and for the inclusion of the views of civil society organizations in the planning process for the upcoming biennium. The representative stressed the impact that the Asia-Pacific region could have in shaping the future development agenda, particularly if civil society organizations were to be allowed to engage in the process effectively. The representative encouraged the region to take a leading role in shaping a more holistic approach to sustainability, recommending that it should also be reflected in the future focus of the programme of work.

72. Another representative of civil society supported the issues concerning technology that had been raised previously, and highlighted ongoing global processes — including those operationalized in the context of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — while encouraging the secretariat to engage more substantively in issues of technology transfer, and to identify enabling conditions in the region. The importance of energy and renewable energy, and the potential for the region to pioneer truly renewable, decentralized, energy delivery systems for all was also noted.

E. Other matters

73. The Committee requested the secretariat to consider providing more comprehensive information, including a list of supplementary presentations and their presenters, when issuing the tentative programme for future sessions.

F. Adoption of the report

74. The Committee adopted the report on its third session on 31 October 2013.

III. Organization of the session

A. Opening, duration and organization

75. The Committee on Environment and Development held its third session in Bangkok from 29 to 31 October 2013.

76. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered opening remarks.

77. A keynote address was delivered by Mr. Pithaya Pookaman, Adviser to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand.

B. Attendance

78. The session was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; France; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Mongolia; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Thailand; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and Macao, China.

79. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies attended: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; and UN-Habitat.

80. Representatives of the following specialized agencies and related organizations attended: International Labour Organization; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; World Health Organization; World Bank; and United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

81. Representatives of two intergovernmental organizations attended, namely the Mekong River Commission and the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia, as well as 20 representatives of civil society and other entities.

C. Election of officers

82. The following officers were elected:

Chair:	Mr. Bektas **Mukhametzhanov** (Kazakhstan)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Sukontha **Aekaraj** (Thailand) Mr. Dae Young **Ju** (Republic of Korea)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Dornath **Aryal** (Nepal)

D. Agenda

83. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Towards achieving sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific: regional agenda-setting for sustainable development.
5. Outcomes of key regional dialogues on sustainable development:
   (a) Asian and Pacific Energy Forum;
   (b) Asian and Pacific Regional Implementation Meeting on Rio+20 Outcomes;
   (c) Second Asia-Pacific Water Summit;
   (d) Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue: From the Millennium Development Goals to the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015;
   (e) Meeting of Stakeholders of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme.
6. Regional preparations for the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific and for the third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III).

7. Consideration of draft resolutions, recommendations and decisions for submission to the Commission at its seventieth session.

8. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme.

9. Other matters.

10. Adoption of the report.

E. Side events

84. A side event entitled "Integrated resource management in Asian cities" was held on 29 October 2013 in cooperation with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

85. A side event entitled "Regional partnerships for sustainable development" was held on 30 October 2013 in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan and the Coalition for the Green Economy and the Development of G-Global.

86. A side event entitled "Dialogue on civil society organization engagement at the regional level" was held on 31 October 2013. It was organized by ESCAP and attended by members of civil society and representatives of members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism.

87. A networking reception to present the SUSTAIN-EU-ASEAN collaboration programme for scientists from European and ASEAN countries was held on 29 October 2013 in cooperation with the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, which served as the programme coordinator.

88. A Pavilion of partners was also established for the duration of the meeting. Exhibitors included the following organizations: AIT-Extension; Asia Low Emission Development Strategies Initiative; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; Coalition for the Green Economy and the Development of G-Global; German Agency for International Cooperation; Institute for Global Environmental Strategies; Institute of Renewable Energy Development of the Asia-Pacific Foundation/Healthy Public Policy Foundation; SUSTAIN EU-ASEAN; SWITCH-Asia Network Facility; United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific; United Nations Development Programme; and UN-Habitat.

Annex

List of documents

Document symbol	Document title	Agenda item
General series		
E/ESCAP/CED(3)/1	Towards achieving sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific: regional agenda-setting for sustainable development	4
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E/ESCAP/CED(3)/INF/2	List of participants	
E/ESCAP/CED(3)/INF/3/Rev.1	Revised tentative programme	